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ABSTRACT

This report describes Philadelphia, Pennsylvania's, Alliance Organizing Project (AOP), which organized parents and families of Philadelphia's public school students to become full partners in Philadelphia school reform. It is one of five case studies in the Indicators Project on Education Organizing, which identified eight indicators of the impact of community organizing for school reform (leadership development, community power, social capital, public accountability, equity, school-community connection, positive school climate, and high quality curriculum and instruction). This report presents a model of the relationship of indicator areas to goals of the community organizing groups, introduces the AOP, describes the evolution of the AOP in the context of systemic reform, and discusses indicators and measures. It focuses on the AOP's accomplishments in four of the eight indicator areas: leadership development, school-community connection, social capital, and educational equity. The report concludes by looking at future directions in deepening, sustaining, and expanding school-level organizing; building on AOP's existing relationships with teachers; and impacting policy and system-wide change. Three appendices present definitions of the indicator areas, the Indicators Project advisory group, and AOP indicators charts (strategies, results, and data sources). (SM)

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CROSS CITY CAMPAIGN FOR URBAN SCHOOL REFORM

PREPARED BY RESEARCH FOR ACTION

AOP

ALLIANCE ORGANIZING PROJECT

Strong Neighborhoods Strong Schools

The Indicators Project on Education Organizing

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Case Study: **AOP**

ALLIANCE ORGANIZING PROJECT

Prepared by

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with

CROSS CITY CAMPAIGN FOR URBAN SCHOOL REFORM
Chris Brown

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Strong Neighborhoods Strong Schools

The Indicators Project on Education Organizing

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The Indicators Project on Education Organizing

The Alliance Organizing Project is one of five case studies in *The Indicators Project*, an action-research project to document the contribution that community organizing makes to school reform, disseminate the findings, and forward the work these groups are doing. The project grows out of the work of the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform's Schools and Community program. The Cross City Campaign believes that while there is widespread agreement among educators and the public on the importance of "parent involvement" and "parents as first teachers," there is far less understanding of the role that strong, well-informed, powerful organizations of parent and community leaders can play in school reform. The Cross City Campaign invited Research for Action, a non-profit educational research organization with a history of studying community-school relations, to be its partner in examining the contribution such organizations can make in bringing about quality educational experiences and equity for urban students and in strengthening low-income urban neighborhoods.

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See report: *Successful Community Organizing for School Reform* for a full discussion of the Education Organizing Indicators Framework and how accomplishments in the indicator areas work together to bring about change in schools and communities

The aim of the research was to develop an Education Organizing Indicators Framework that documents observable outcomes in schools and student learning. We developed the Framework by looking at the activities of organizing groups across multiple sites and categorizing their work within eight key indicator areas. The eight indicator areas are: leadership development, community power, social capital, public accountability, equity, school/community connections, positive school climate, and high quality instruction and curriculum. (See Appendix A for definitions of the indicator areas). We also developed a Theory of Change that shows how work in each of the indicator areas contributes to building community capacity and improving schools—ultimately increasing student learning. (See p. 6 for a model of the Theory of Change.)

A major purpose of this report and the project's other case studies is to show the accomplishments of community organizing for school reform by using the Education Organizing Indicators Framework. We illustrate the utility of the Framework for documenting the contribution of community organizing groups to school reform by looking at selected organizing "stories" in some depth. In each report, we use four of the indicator areas to interpret the organizing stories, showing evidence that the group is making a difference. The report also shows the complexity and challenge of community organizing for school reform. It illustrates the range of strategies that groups use, how local context affects organizing and outcomes, as well as how organizing spurs and shapes local education reform.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING GROUPS

Community organizing groups working for school reform share the following characteristics:

- They work to change public schools to make them more equitable and effective for all students.
- They build a large base of members who take collective action to further their agenda.
- They build relationships and collective responsibility by identifying shared concerns among neighborhood residents and creating alliances and coalitions that cross neighborhood and institutional boundaries.
- They develop leadership among community residents to carry out agendas that the membership determines through a democratic governance structure.
- They use the strategies of adult education, civic participation, public action, and negotiation to build power for residents of low- to moderate-income communities that results in action to address their concerns.

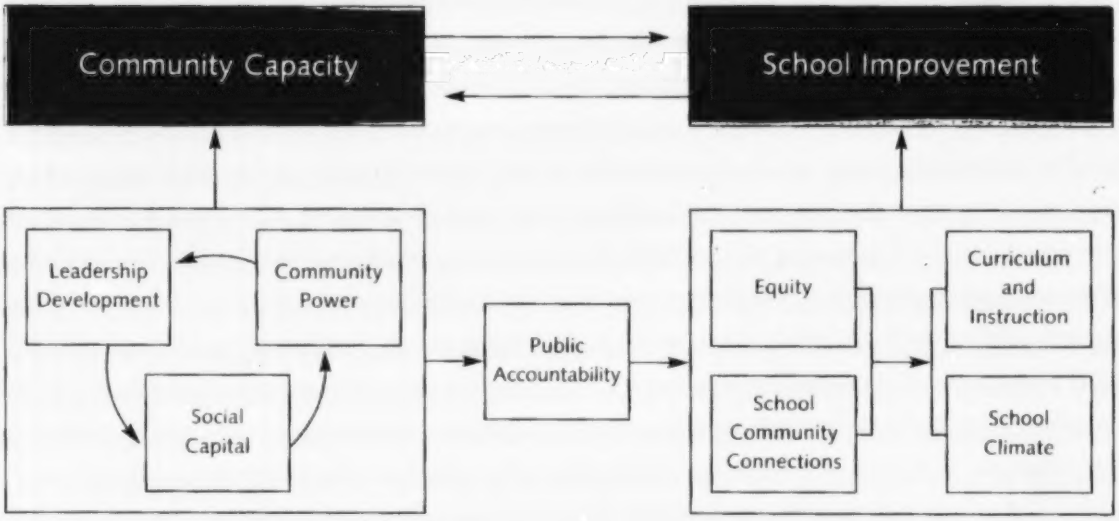
RESEARCH APPROACH

In order to develop an indicators framework the research design included four levels of investigation:

- Research for Action (RFA) and the Cross City Campaign (CCC) conducted a broad search and created a database of 140 community organizing groups working on school reform nationwide.
- RFA and CCC collaborated to select 19 groups for lengthy telephone interviews. Analysis of those interviews yielded a preliminary indicators framework.
- RFA and CCC, with the help of a national advisory group (see appendix B) selected five groups for case studies.
- RFA research teams and CCC staff conducted two site-visits of three days each in spring and fall of 2000 to each of the five sites. Interviews were conducted with a wide array of public school stakeholders, including parents, teachers, administrators, elected officials, and education reform groups. The researchers also observed community and school events relevant to local organizing.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT IS TO SHOW THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING.

Theory of Change: Relationship of Community Capacity Building and School Improvement



The theory of change model shows the pathway of influence between building community capacity and school improvement. Work in three indicator areas—leadership development, community power, and social capital—increases civic participation and leverages power through partnerships and relationships within and across communities, as well as with school district, civic, and elected officials. Public accountability is the hinge that connects community capacity with school improvement. Increased community participation and strong relationships together broaden accountability for improving public education for children of low- to moderate-income families. Public accountability creates the political will to forward equity and school/community connection, thereby improving school climate, curriculum, and instruction making them more responsive to communities, laying the basis for improved student learning and achievement. Stronger schools, in turn, contribute to strengthening community capacity.

Introduction to the Alliance Organizing Project

The goal of the Alliance Organizing Project (AOP) is to organize parents and families of Philadelphia's public school students to become "full partners" in Philadelphia school reform. By full partners, AOP means that: the perspectives of parents and community members are valued; parents participate in decision-making at the local school and district levels; and parents and teachers work together to support children's learning both at school and at home. Because parents are also community members and connected to local community and religious groups, AOP also works to engage community leaders with school reform.

At the school level, AOP strengthens relationships among concerned parents and brings them together to form school-based Parent Leadership Teams. These teams of six to twelve parents first identify the issues that concern parents and that parents believe are important to the school success of their children. They then work to build relationships with the school's principal and teachers to address those concerns. Through these relationships, the teams aim to build parent/professional partnerships to improve children's school experiences and also ensure that parents are involved in making decisions on issues such as use of resources, educational priorities, and safety.

AOP also organizes at the citywide level. Representatives of Parent Leadership Teams attend citywide meetings where they exchange stories of their organizing experiences and identify concerns that are shared across their different local contexts. The group then develops citywide campaigns that seek to address their cross-school concerns through changes in district, city and state policy.

Only six years old, AOP is a relatively young organization. Nonetheless, it has already succeeded in establishing itself as a force in the Philadelphia school reform movement. To understand the work of building parent leadership and creating successful educator/community partnerships, we look at the work of AOP at school sites and at the citywide level, showing the interrelationship between local and policy-level efforts. AOP is active in all the eight indicator areas identified in this study.[1] In this report, we relate AOP's accomplishments in detail in four of the areas.[2] The four areas are:

- **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**
- **SCHOOL/COMMUNITY CONNECTION**
- **SOCIAL CAPITAL**
- **EQUITY**

NOTES

1. For a chart representing AOP's work in all the eight indicator areas, see Appendix C. This chart is not comprehensive, but does illustrate the kinds of strategies AOP has used in each area and examples of its accomplishments.

2. The data supporting the accomplishments of AOP were gathered during site visits in spring and fall 2000. The report is not comprehensive of all AOP has accomplished, but is intended to illustrate what documentation and measurement of its accomplishments might look like.

Alliance Organizing Project

The Alliance Organizing Project (AOP) is a single-issue organizing group focused on making parents and families full partners in school reform. AOP was the idea of a number of advocacy groups concerned with the lack of parent and community participation in school reform and was initiated in 1995 as part of Philadelphia's *Children Achieving* reform plan. During *Children Achieving* AOP organizers worked in 30 of the District's 260 schools as well as citywide.

Over the course of the past six years, the number of AOP organizers has fluctuated depending on its funding. As of spring 2001, AOP had a racially and ethnically diverse staff, which included an executive director, assistant director, one full-time organizer, and two part-time organizers. The executive and assistant directors form a team with one white and one African-American member. The group of organizers included a white, an African-American and a Latina. The entire staff was female. The full and part-time organizers were parents or grandparents of children in the public schools. They have come up through the AOP ranks, first as members of school-based Parent Leadership Teams and representatives and/or leaders of the AOP citywide, then as intern organizers, and now as professional organizers. The development of parents into organizers reflects AOP's commitment to being a parent-led organization.

In spring 2001, the organizers were working in seven schools, five elementary and two middle schools. The work in the middle schools is the most recent, and the intent is to continue to organize up through the feeder high schools. At each of the schools, the organizer works intensely with a Parent Leadership Team of 6-12 volunteer parents. AOP also works citywide on issues related to teacher vacancies and teacher quality, with a focus on the schools in the lowest income neighborhoods.

Even though AOP was part of *Children Achieving*, Philadelphia's systemic reform program from 1995-2000, an independent board has always governed it. The board originally consisted of two co-chairs and other members representing the advocacy groups that helped to create AOP. Today the board is primarily made up of parents and community members from the schools and neighborhoods where AOP is active, with the two co-chairs remaining to provide continuity.

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The Evolution of AOP in the Context of Systemic Reform

"[The Alliance Organizing Project is] a membership-based organization of parents and others in Philadelphia organizing to build power and improve schools so that all children can achieve. AOP reaches these goals through building relationships among all stakeholders, developing leaders, building parent groups, and waging issue campaigns on a local school and citywide level." FROM AOP MISSION STATEMENT, 1/23/01

ORIGINS OF AOP

In 1993, Philadelphia Special Commonwealth Court Judge Doris Smith issued a court ruling, stating that public school children in Philadelphia were not achieving at acceptable levels. For many parents in Philadelphia, this was not news. For parents in urban schools across the country, under-achievement of children in public schools had become the norm. At about the time of Judge Smith's ruling, education advocates and other stakeholders in Philadelphia's public school system began a series of discussions. Representatives from the Education Law Center, Parents Union for Public Schools, and Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth sat together, along with Asian-Americans United and other special interest groups. Those discussions led to a consensus: Philadelphia's public school system must change, and parents, whose children attend public schools, are best suited to usher in such change. Advocates began examining strategies for empowering parents and equipping them with the training and resources they would need. Those conversations went on for about a year.

During those discussions, the Philadelphia Public School Board selected David Hornbeck as the city's new schools superintendent. Hornbeck came to Philadelphia with a plan for sweeping change in the way education was conducted. His *Children Achieving* agenda spoke of the need to empower parents and to engage stakeholders in urban communities to become part of the school reform process. For Hornbeck, this meant developing strategies for empowering parents and equipping them with the training and resources they would need to create positive change at their local schools. He began conversations with the advocates and a joint vision was reached. Thus in 1995, the Alliance Organizing Project was born. (From Protest to Power: The Evolution of AOP, 1998, p.2)

For its first five years, AOP was a part of systemic reform in Philadelphia. Public engagement, with a special emphasis on the involvement of parents and families, was one of ten components of *Children Achieving*, Philadelphia's reform plan. In 1995, *Children Achieving* received a $50 million one-to-two matching grant over five years from the Annenberg Foundation. From 1995-2000, AOP was supported through these funds. The original plan envisioned funding organizers in all the district's 22 clusters (geographic units under *Children Achieving* that included a neighborhood high school and its middle and elementary feeder schools).

As a part of *Children Achieving*, AOP received substantial funding and its mission was part of official rhetoric, which stated that, "fundamental change [in the education of children] will not occur without a transformation in the relationship between every school and the communities which surround it." (*Children Achieving Action Design*, VIII-I). The inclusion of a community organizing initiative that was to work to bring parents and community to the school reform table in a district reform effort was unique. Many hoped that AOP's inclusion in *Children Achieving* would herald wider recognition of the need for and value of organized parents and community as partners in school reform. However, the close tie to *Children Achieving* was not all positive for AOP. The *Children Achieving* program was first implemented in six of the 22 district clusters, and to parallel the roll-out of reform, AOP also started up in those clusters. However, these were not necessarily the neighborhoods where parents were most interested in having a group such as AOP. AOP's first efforts were hobbled by the fact that the organizing did not develop organically out of neighborhood need and desire, but was imposed as part of a centrally-directed reform. Some of these initial efforts eventually died.

There were also a number of local forces, involving principals, teachers, and other parent groups, that limited AOP's growth and impact at the school level. Many principals and teachers were only vaguely aware of the components of *Children Achieving*, and some, aware or not of the vision of *Children Achieving*, were skeptical of yet another round of reform. As a result, in many instances the work of AOP, instead of being welcomed into a school, was opposed as part of a more general response to *Children Achieving*. Furthermore, rumors often preceded AOP, making its entry into a school even more problematic.

CHILDREN ACHIEVING: SYSTEMIC REFORM

In 1995 Superintendent Hornbeck launched *Children Achieving*, a ten point reform agenda based on the assumption that previous attempts at school reform have largely failed because they were too incremental, too piecemeal, too narrowly framed, and did not attempt to alter the "system" itself. In contrast, *Children Achieving* intended to offer a coherent and comprehensive reform design. As a systemic reform effort, it sought to raise student achievement and improve teaching and learning by establishing standards for student performance, implementing a strong accountability system, empowering schools by moving authority for instructional decisions away from the central office, and increasing capacity by providing strong supports for teachers and students. Content standards outlined the knowledge and skills that Philadelphia students should acquire. The accountability system assessed schools' performance annually and rewarded progress or sanctioned decline every two years. Decentralization offered new organizational structures—clusters, local school councils, and small learning communities—that aimed to move instructional decision-making closer to local neighborhoods, schools and classrooms.

Children Achieving offered a powerful set of ideas to guide educational improvement in the city. These included:

- *Primacy of results:* Results are what matter; how they are achieved is less important.
- *Equity:* The school district must be an advocate for the low-income children it serves. Equity—of academic expectations, learning opportunities and achievement outcomes—is a paramount objective.
- *School autonomy:* Those working closest to students know what's best for them, and want and need the freedom and authority to act on their decisions.
- *Strong incentives:* To spur action at the cluster and school level, strong incentives must be developed.
- *Do it all at once:* Reform in all aspects of the system must occur simultaneously and immediately to achieve significant results.

Many principals anticipated that organizing would be confrontational and disruptive, and maybe even hostile to themselves and teachers. Some associated AOP with previous community control efforts that they believed sought to disempower education professionals. These principals put pressure on the principal's association, the Commonwealth Association of School Administrators, to protect the right of principals to invite in or reject organizing at their school. Although some central office and cluster-level administrators encouraged principals to allow AOP to organize at their schools, in the end, the extent of AOP's reach was greatly affected by the receptivity of principals. In a few instances, such as the McKinley School (K-5 with 450 students), a group of AOP parent leaders persisted despite several years of an unwelcoming principal, followed by the rapid turnover of two other principals. The McKinley Parent Leadership Team had many setbacks, but persisted because of their belief that parent involvement was essential to provide the strongest educational program possible for the neighborhood's children. AOP's citywide focus and successes in other schools in the same neighborhood helped the McKinley parents sustain their efforts even when they were not welcome in the school.

AOP's impact was also diminished by the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers' (PFT) opposition to reforms which would substantially increase parents' role in decision-making. One part of *Children Achieving*'s decentralization plan was the establishment of Local School Councils with equal representation of parents and teachers. These councils were originally intended to have jurisdiction over all major decisions, including budget allocation, use of external resources, safety and security measures, transportation, and facilities management, as well as the selection and evaluation of principals. However, the PFT vigorously opposed full implementation of the Local School Councils. A confrontation between the union and the district over this issue resulted in changes in the composition and scope of the councils; it was agreed that the councils would have more teachers than parents, and would be advisory bodies focused on discipline and school safety. Arguably, this was a critical turning point away from the district's original commitment to empowering parents and communities. The superintendent and other architects of the Philadelphia reform had underestimated what it would take to make schools and the school system ready to accept parents as full reform partners.

Adding to the dissension, a number of traditional parent advocacy groups, such as the Home and School Association, contested the need for a new

group, feeling its creation negated their volunteer work with parents. Other groups resented the preference shown to AOP as the recipient of *Children Achieving* monies. As a result of the controversy surrounding its genesis within the district's systemic reform program, the legitimacy of AOP was questioned from the start.

Given such an adverse climate, it is a major accomplishment for AOP to have survived beyond *Children Achieving* and the departure of Superintendent Hornbeck. District, city and neighborhood decision-makers, including the president of the Board of Education[3], City Council representatives, school district and community leaders, attend AOP public events indicating that AOP is now recognized as a player in school reform. A full year after *Children Achieving*, AOP partnerships and funding are on solid ground, and it continues to play a visible role organizing and representing parents in schools and citywide.

NOTES

3. This study was completed before the November 2001 state takeover of the School District of Philadelphia and the dissolution of the Board of Education.

Indicators and Measures

AOP is active in every indicator area. This report, however, discusses AOP's activity in four of the eight indicator areas: leadership development, school/community connection, social capital, and equity. We selected these four because they emerged as particularly strong areas of AOP's accomplishment in both the interviews we conducted and the events we observed during site visits, and because they are useful for portraying the start up of an organizing effort. Our data collection also draws on archival documentation, including reports and newspaper clippings.

The report begins with AOP's accomplishments in the area of leadership development. For a new organizing initiative, building a base of members is a primary task. AOP has developed a group of parent leaders who now lead the organization as staff and board members. They have also developed seven school-based Parent Leadership Teams with the capacity to lead local and citywide organizing campaigns as well as run programs. Within the second indicator area, school/community connection, the report documents AOP's success in making schools open to benefiting from the resources—human and otherwise—of the local community. Next, the report discusses AOP's

THEY HAVE DEVELOPED PARENT LEADERSHIP TEAMS WITH THE CAPACITY TO LEAD LOCAL
AND CITYWIDE ORGANIZING CAMPAIGNS AS WELL AS RUN PROGRAMS

accomplishments in building social capital. The AOP organizing model is a relational one that centers on building social capital—relationships of trust and reciprocity. AOP Parent Leadership Teams have reached out into local communities to build networks of support for schools. They have also built partnerships with teachers, creating more mutual relations across traditional power imbalances. Creating new power dynamics in schools is fundamental to AOP's stated goal of changing the culture of schools so that they welcome parents' ideas and contributions. AOP has also had success in building relationships with people in the district, city government, teachers' union, and advocacy groups, which enables AOP to play a role in influencing policy decisions. The fourth indicator area that we explore in this report is equity. AOP has worked successfully to bring new financial and human resources into schools to enhance both school climate and children's academic achievement.

First Indicator Area: Leadership Development

"I realized I had other talents that I had never tapped on because I was always a mother and wife....I started out as a parent, became a parent leader, a citywide co-chair, a board member, intern, and now a full- fledged organizer. And I think this is my calling.... I've been saying [it's as if] *I've been in college because I was not a speaker* [before working with AOP]....*My first big speech was the May 17th Effective Schools Campaign public action, when people came from Chicago and New York to speak on what's working in their schools....Now I have the tools to tell Mr. Hornbeck, "Mr. Hornbeck, excuse me. I don't think that's right." Or whoever's there. Even the principal. We feel equality with them. We don't feel...well, I don't feel scared anymore."*

PARENT LEADER, NOW AN ORGANIZER

AOP organizing is guided by the belief that organizational growth and community power cannot be separated from the individual growth of its members. Reflecting this philosophy, an AOP executive director stated, *"Our greatest resource is organized people and helping people figure out how to engage in public life. And we are, in many ways, kind of like a school of public life, if you will."* AOP organizers coach parents in the skills they need to identify problems, research potential solutions, and take collective action to bring their issues to public officials. They also guide parents in reflection, evaluation, and strategic decision-making.

The basic unit of AOP organizing is the Parent Leadership Team at an individual school. Representatives from these teams form the AOP citywide group. When parents become leaders on school teams and active through citywide AOP campaigns, their sense of efficacy increases and they begin to think of themselves as agents of school change.

It is almost always true that parents first get involved with AOP because of concerns about their own children's educational experience. One of the distinguishing characteristics of a leader is the shift from a focus on her/his own child to thinking about improving education for all the children in the school. The leaders are those who begin to appreciate working as a collective and recognize the power of a unified body working for all the children in their community. In describing the process of becoming a leader on a team, one parent explained that participation on a parent team had given her and *"other dedicated parents the opportunity to pick an issue, sit down at a table, and try to resolve it...and get some stuff done."* She described this experience as one that has become *"essential"* to her.

Although AOP's organizing focuses on school reform, several AOP parent leaders have become appointed or elected members of community organizations as well as district committees. This has included positions with a local Community Resource Board of the Philadelphia School District, a committee of the American Street Empowerment Zone, the leadership group of a Philadelphia neighborhood association, and the Philadelphia School District's state-mandated Empowerment Team. The histories of these AOP parent leaders illustrate how leadership development in one arena—education—can build leadership skills applicable to community and citywide issues.

AOP starts its leadership development at the individual school level, and this is the level where AOP is the strongest. Parents show the most dramatic changes in their leadership capabilities at the local school level. The changes also can be seen, however, within the governance and staffing of AOP, which is increasingly parent-led. Evidence of AOP's success in developing parents as education leaders includes: recognition of *parents' increased abilities, knowledge and skills* by parents themselves, teachers and principals; *parents taking on new roles in schools*, such as designing, finding funding for and leading after school programs; and *parents taking on key roles within AOP*, such as citywide co-chair, organizer and Board member.

Parents' Increased Abilities, Knowledge and Skills

Many AOP parents talk about the kinds of skills and knowledge they have gained as a result of being a part of AOP organizing. These include: learning to conduct "one-on-ones" (individual discussions with other parents to identify their concerns); creating agendas and leading meetings; researching issues; speaking in public; planning and carrying out public actions; and, most importantly, negotiating in the different power arenas—district, union, city—that have an impact on schools. Principals, teachers, and political leaders have noted the accomplishments of AOP's leadership development. In the following example, we look at the growth of parents as education leaders at the Welsh Elementary School and the impact on children's educational experience. Welsh is a K-6 elementary school of 835 students in a low-income African-American and Latino neighborhood.

A Welsh teacher described the change she saw in a parent who had a long history of working at the school prior to her association with AOP and who had been a president of the school's Home and School Association.

"AOP has transformed [the parent]. It has created a new context for her. She always used to help a lot around the school. But the Home and School people are speaking politically. They were not doing that before....She [the organizer] lets [the parent] be as strong as she can be. There are some strong parents here and AOP lets them act on their strengths."

The teacher also remarked on the change in the Home and School Association, from a primarily fundraising and social group to an independent group that sets its own agenda and addresses a range of "political" issues.

"[The Home and School Association] *used to raise candy money and pay for sixth grade graduation. And that was their main focus. And now they're talking about policies in the school district and, you know...bigger issues. I think that's really wonderful. That definitely comes through the AOP people. Home and School's a totally different organization."*

The teacher commented on the change of power relationships involved in this shift. She reported that in the past the Home and School had been *"under"* the principal. Now, she says, *"They [parents] have their own agenda. He [the principal] goes to some of their meetings, but not all of them."*

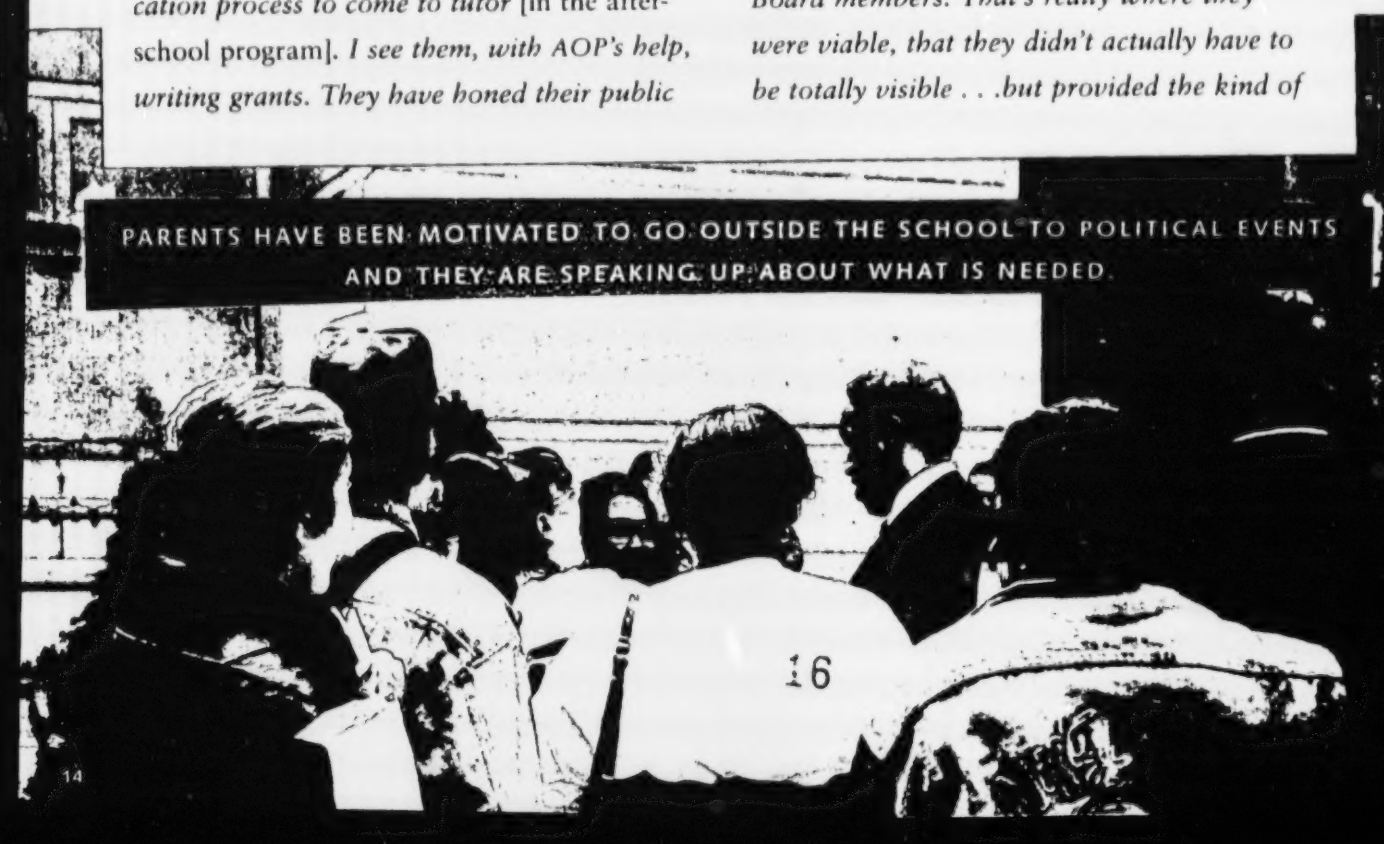
The principal also noted the change in the Home and School Association as an institution. Previous to AOP organizing, it had consisted of *"two or three ladies"* who mostly did some fundraising. Now attendance at Home and School meetings range from 25–30 parents. Before, the two or three active parents were all African-American; as a result of the relationships AOP has built among parents, the group now includes both African-Americans and Latinos.

The Home and School Association has begun to address a range of issues that concern parents, including campaigning for crossing guards at heavily trafficked intersections, gaining a parking lot for the teachers, implementing an after-school parent-run homework club, and addressing teacher vacancies. All of these issues have required parents to engage with local and city political leaders. The principal acknowledged changes he has seen in the parents.

"I see parents putting together their resumes, using technology and making out an application process to come to tutor [in the after-school program]. *I see them, with AOP's help, writing grants. They have honed their public speaking skills and speak intelligently. They have been motivated to go outside the school to political events, like when Mayor Street was at Edison High School, and they are speaking up at these events about what is needed."*

The principal recognizes how this individual development and the resulting changes in the Home and School Association can support the school. He is eager for a parking lot for teachers because of the high incidence of car vandalism in the area. He feels that with such added safety measures for teachers he could more easily recruit teachers, and that professional morale would improve.

"We met with two city councilmen regarding that issue [a parking lot for teachers]. *We also met with our Home and School Association. We've invited people from the maintenance division of the School District of Philadelphia to come and address that concern. That all did occur. I think that, again, a lot of that organization and direction occurred from AOP working with the Home and School Executive Board members. That's really where they were viable, that they didn't actually have to be totally visible . . .but provided the kind of*



PARENTS HAVE BEEN MOTIVATED TO GO OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL TO POLITICAL EVENTS AND THEY ARE SPEAKING UP ABOUT WHAT IS NEEDED.

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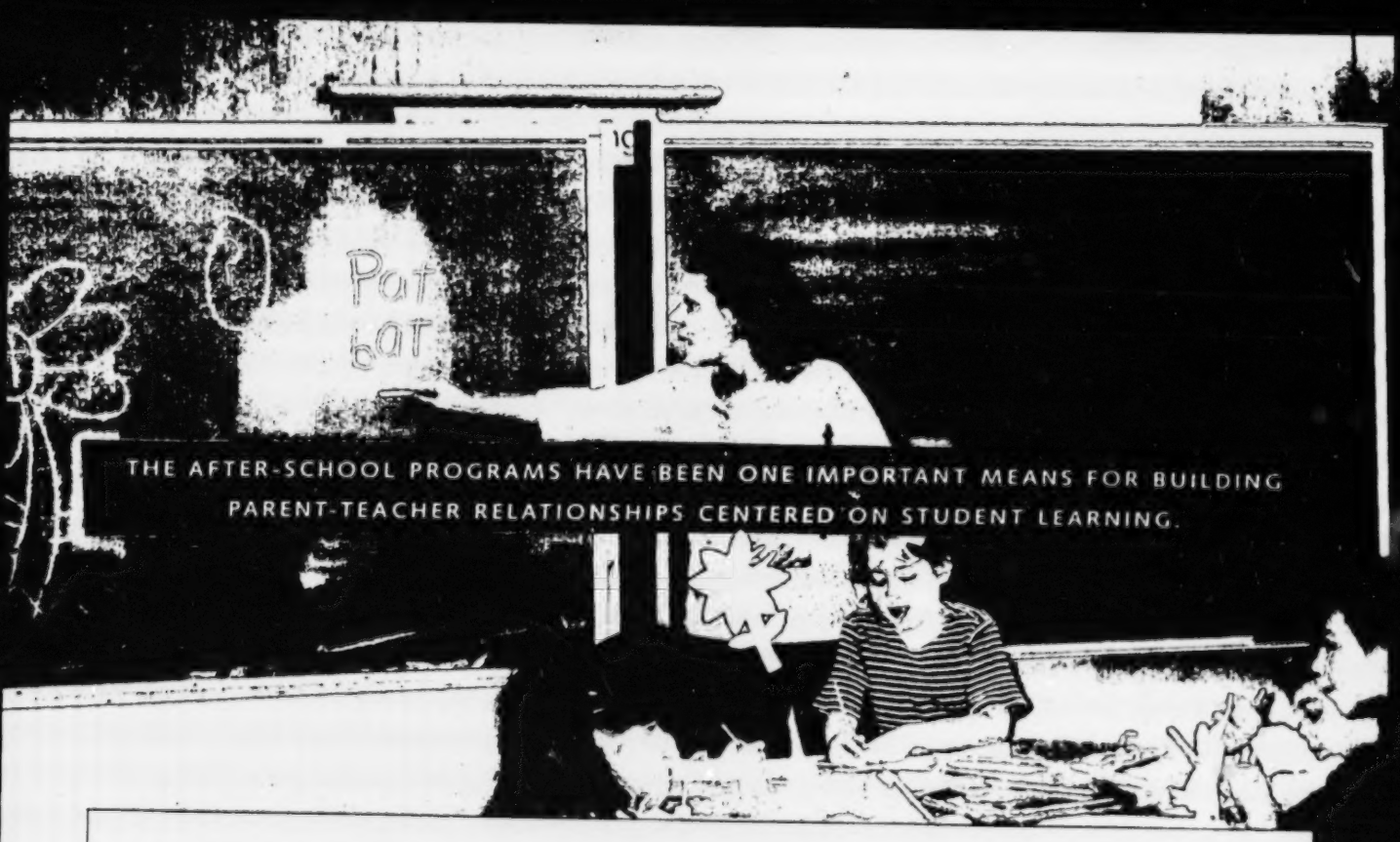

THE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN ONE IMPORTANT MEANS FOR BUILDING PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS CENTERED ON STUDENT LEARNING.

In thinking about expanding its organizing to new schools, AOP is looking especially at neighborhood feeder patterns—middle and high schools where there are likely to be parents who have already had experience with AOP at the elementary school level. AOP has been assessing ways to sustain momentum at current sites when organizers move on and shift their focus toward new schools. Finally, AOP is considering the balance between expanding its organizing to new sites and deepening the organizing at existing sites; one consideration is the question of how broad-based AOP's school-level organizing needs to be to exert a credible influence within the system. If the district is privatized with different vendors in control of different schools, AOP will need to reconsider its strategies for having broader impact.

Throughout its history, AOP has reached out to local faith communities, seeking the support of churches and other religious congregations for local schools. On occasion, churches and synagogues have provided space for meetings of AOP Parent Leadership Teams, when they were not yet welcome in a local school, and/or for citywide public events. Several influential pastors have participated in AOP public actions, indicating their interest in closer cooperation between faith communities and the local schools.

In Germantown, where AOP has been able to draw on active community groups including the support of several religious congregations, community engagement has been critical to the organizing successes at the Kelly School. In the future, AOP aims to increase its work with local faith communities in order to build the neighborhood base of support for school reform.

In the past, AOP has only on occasion worked in coordination with student groups. Early in its history AOP did organize at a high school, and parent leaders began to build relations with a student organizing group. AOP work at this high school, however, died down. As AOP once again looks toward organizing at high schools, it intends to try to work more closely with student groups at those schools.

Building on AOP's Existing Relationships with Teachers

AOP has developed a number of ways of reaching out to teachers in the schools where it is active. The after-school programs have been one important means for building parent-teacher relationships centered on student learning. These programs have turned the parent-professional relationship into one of bilateral exchange. AOP has also connected with teachers

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support and staff development to get parents feeling comfortable to be able to be very articulate on an issue, to be able to dialogue with people, not to feel intimidated by them because they were, quote, city council people or school district executives or whatever."

Principals in other schools where AOP has established positive relations echo similar sentiments. For example, a principal at the Kelly Elementary School (K-4 with 1,100 students) related that after parents, organized by AOP, were elected to the Home and School Association, the Home and School led the effort to bring the 100 Book Challenge to his school, in order to increase the focus on reading both at school and at home. These parents, prior to their election to the Home and School Association, had worked with AOP on a number of other school-related issues: linking a church after-school program and classroom teachers in order to enhance homework support for children; raising funds for a playground renovation; obtaining classroom space in nearby community buildings to eliminate the use of mobile units on the playground as temporary classrooms as the means for dealing with overcrowding; obtaining a needed traffic light near the school; and instituting Safe Corridors, a program that organizes older community members to police the school area during times when children are going to and from school.

One Kelly parent commented on the ways that AOP organizing had changed both individuals and the school.

"*Over the years* [those] *who have come through the public school system* [have learned] *that they don't count, they don't matter, they are peons....*[AOP is] *giving them strength, and giving them—'oh, I can do something.' It has been so helpful because we have actually gotten things. It's just not marching, it's doing, it's getting the resources, and giving people another venue and actually is showing the progress.*"

Parents Taking on New Roles in the Education of Children

A major accomplishment of AOP parent leaders has been the establishment of parent-run after-school programs at several elementary schools. These programs provided the opportunity for parents to serve as teachers, program administrators, leaders of staff meetings, and liaisons with teachers. The programs also strengthen AOP's organizing by putting AOP into close contact with more parents and making visible AOP's role in improving children's educational experience.

Many parents readily supported the after-school programs because they felt that their children would benefit from an extended school day with homework help and academic enrichment. For many parents, English was a second language and they felt unable to provide their children with the help they needed. Others worked and found it difficult to give their children's homework a lot of attention. Another shared parent concern was the need for a safe place for children during after school hours. Although there were other after-school programs in some of the schools and neighborhoods now served by the AOP programs, the previously available programs did not offer enough places for all the children who needed after-school care and/or extra academic support, especially in the early grades.

When parents first approached one of the principals to request after-school programs, he told them he did not have the money in his budget to staff or operate any new after-school programs. This did not deter the parents who decided to raise funds and hire parents to create and run the programs. In order to handle the costs of stipends for parent-teachers and supplies, the parents needed to learn to write grant proposals. AOP organizers guided the leaders through this process, and ultimately three schools in one neighborhood received money from two community agencies for their first year. At an AOP public event, a representative of one of the granting agencies remarked that, "*Most of the professional development and resources we provide goes to teachers. But we see the importance of parents and community and have begun to pay attention there.*" AOP also helped interested parents learn to prepare resumes in order to apply for the after-school positions.

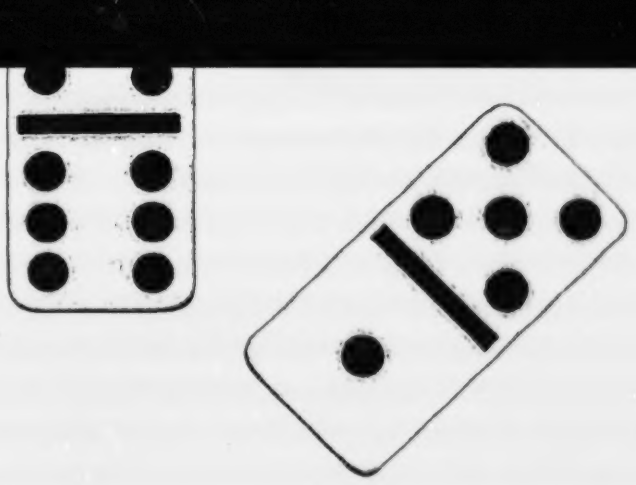
During its first year, which began in January 2000, the program took place at all three schools two afternoons a week. At each school, 20-40 children attended each afternoon. At two schools the focus was on homework help, and at one school with a large number of Spanish-speaking families the emphasis was on parents and children reading Spanish-language books together.

In addition to learning to run the programs, the parent-teachers also learned to lead staff meetings where they shared teaching experiences and strategies. Parent-teachers also discussed how to use the programs as a platform for building relationships with teachers and bringing more parents into the schools. One of the community agencies that funded the program provided professional development for the parents. The professional development focused on instructional techniques and the schools' curricula. A few classroom teachers gave parents ideas for classroom management, and teachers and parent-teachers together selected books for purchase to be given out weekly to participating families.

In its second year, the program increased the number of children served and added a third day. Two of the existing programs continued, one closed, and a new program opened in another neighborhood. New sources of funding were identified and one of the parent leaders who had become an AOP organizer was hired as director of all the after-school programs. The parent-teachers also re-shaped their programs in light of their experiences during the first year. At all three schools, the parent-teachers decided to target the program to children, K–2, who were identified by teachers as falling behind. The parent-teachers began to work more closely with classroom teachers who referred children they believed would benefit from the extra attention.

Working with young children was an unexpected pleasure for some of the parent-teachers. In a conversation with one parent about her role as parent-teacher the interviewer learned that,

"She hadn't realized that she liked working with kids until she did this. And she stressed that she was learning by helping the kids. I asked her what she was learning, and she talked about games, mentioning dominos in particular and that she hadn't realized games could help children learn math. She said that she is now doing these games at home with her children. As we talked, children called to her for help or to check their work. She smiled the entire time and seemed really comfortable in her role." FIELDNOTES FROM AN OBSERVATION OF THE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM



During the same observation session, a Spanish-speaking parent who had rarely come to the school previously was reading books with English as a Second Language (ESL) students.

In interviews, teachers from the Welsh Elementary School noted that the homework of students attending the after-school program is completed more often than before and the extra practice has increased students' pride and motivation. The children now know more of the sight vocabulary in their reading program and feel more at ease in class. One teacher commented that the after-school program is beneficial because *"children are receiving extra small group instruction both academically and socially."*

At the McKinley School, the second year of the program brought new levels of parent-professional cooperation. One of the teachers was now working side-by-side with the parent-teachers in the after-school program. Her participation helped to ensure continuity between the classroom and the after-school program. The program drew more parents into the school and the Parent Leadership Team doubled to 24 members. A new principal was assigned to McKinley that year, and she was so pleased with the program and the level of parent involvement at her school that she sought funding for continuation of the after-school program during the 2001-02 school year.

Parents Taking on Roles in AOP as Citywide Co-chairs, Organizers and Board Members

From its beginnings, AOP has been committed to becoming a parent-led organization. Initially, AOP organizers were hired by local community development and service agencies in order to ground AOP organizing in established neighborhood groups. The complexities of working through multiple community groups with different philosophies about how to bring about change led AOP to hire its second cohort of organizers directly. Many from this second group came to AOP with previous community organizing experience, often outside of Philadelphia. Over time, however, AOP has developed a group of organizers who have come up through the organization. These organizers often began their involvement with AOP at a local school. They became active in AOP through participation on Parent Leadership Teams and many represented their team at citywide AOP meetings. This group gained leadership experience through serving as citywide co-chairs, leading research on issues that concerned parents, and representing AOP publicly. Their research often brought them into face-to-face dialogue with district and city decision-makers, including the superintendent, Board of Education members, City Council representatives, and union officials.

AOP's board was initially made up of representatives of the various advocacy groups that helped to form the organization. Currently, however, the board consists primarily of parents and community members from the neighborhoods where AOP is active. As board members, parents gain experience with organizational policy-making and learning how to run a non-profit group. The prominence of parents as organizers and on the board also serves to sustain AOP's work over time. AOP's executive director believes it *"adds depth"* to the organization because parents have a persistent commitment to improving their children's schools.

Second Indicator Area: School/Community Connection

The AOP relational organizing model naturally leads its work in the direction of bringing the school and local community closer together for the benefit of children. When AOP organizers, board members, and parent leaders describe the kinds of changes AOP organizing is trying to make, they often say that they are trying to change *"the culture of the school"* so that parents are regarded as a resource to children's education and participants in decision-making.

In this indicator area, we look primarily at the success AOP is having in engaging community members in school improvement efforts and involving education professionals in community issues that impact on local schools. Evidence of AOP accomplishment in this indicator area include *engagement of community members and agencies in local schools, increased parent-teacher collaboration* around issues affecting schools, and *extending the use of the school facility* to serve community needs.

Engagement of Community Members and Agencies in Improving Local Schools

"We as parents alone, you know, if we see ourselves only as parents, we actually deny our potential power of being residents and voters. So I think some of what will make our fight effective, and this might be a very personal view, from my point of view, yet I think some of what can make our fight truly effective is really actually seeing ourselves not just as parents, but as community people. And then pulling our community in on the fight.

ORGANIZER

Since its beginning, AOP has been working in an African-American neighborhood in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. This neighborhood has many active churches and community agencies, but before AOP organized the groups and churches, they did not involve themselves with the local schools. However, they responded positively to AOP parents' urging them to become more connected to efforts to improve conditions for learning in the schools. AOP work in this area of the city provides a solid example of AOP's success in bringing community resources to bear on improving local schools.

At the Kelly School, for example, community groups and AOP collaborated to respond to parent concerns about safety in the school area. Together, they started

a community-run, volunteer Safe Corridors program, through which senior community members patrol the school area during hours children are going to and from school. The parents and community groups also joined forces to fight for and win a needed traffic light, and insisted that a fence be built around the schoolyard after intruders harassed children playing there. In response to parent dissatisfaction with the use of temporary trailers as classrooms to alleviate overcrowding, community groups worked with AOP to find alternative spaces in community buildings.

By showing that it could engage community resources to help meet the needs at Kelly school, AOP built trust with the principal who was initially skeptical about opening the school to AOP. This growing trust made it possible for AOP to begin to address education issues more directly. For example, organizers connected several classroom teachers with a local church after-school program to coordinate better homework support for children in the program.

AOP parents also developed ways to involve community members in helping to improve children's reading. After carrying out research on supplementary reading improvement programs, the parents selected the 100 Book Challenge program. The parents brought the idea of using the 100 Book Challenge program to the school staff; staff and parents then formed a joint committee and launched a pilot effort in some grades. The committee members, parents, and ten teachers, wrote grants and were awarded funds to support the effort, including a $5,000 AOP Reading Initiative grant that AOP citywide had available for joint teacher-parent partnerships focused on reading. As part of this program, community members have come into the school as reading mentors. The program was so successful that it *"exploded"* to every grade.

In a North Philadelphia Latino and African-American community, connecting school and community took a different form. As a neighborhood characterized by close-knit family networks and a strong sense of community identity, this area was fertile ground for community organizing around issues concerning schools and children. While the neighborhood is served by several elementary schools, parents often have children in one school and nephews, nieces and cousins in one or two of the other nearby schools.

Parents from three elementary schools located a few blocks from one another began working cooperatively around the need to improve safety in the neighborhood. The parents wanted additional crossing guards at heavily trafficked intersections. They believed that the neighborhood warranted additional crossing guards because of the heavy traffic and because there was a lot of drug activity in the area. Parents from the three schools initiated a Crossing Guard Campaign, which was adopted by AOP citywide. They met with members of the local police force as well as with elected City Council representatives to discuss the problem and ask for their support in seeking solutions. At a public event, attended by both the local police and City Council representatives, the parents asked for a public commitment of assistance in seeking additional crossing guards in a number of neighborhoods where AOP was active.

In another campaign to improve both safety and children's academic achievement, the same group of parent leaders worked together successfully to get grants from community service and education agencies for after-school programs at the three schools. The head of one of the granting agencies said that these mini-grants to AOP for their after-school program were *"among the most successful."*

Increased Parent-Teacher Collaboration

At two of the North Philadelphia schools described above, teachers and parents have worked together around various initiatives. At the Welsh School, teachers and parents formed a joint AOP/PFT safety committee. Teachers supported the parents in the AOP Crossing Guard campaign and AOP parents, in turn, have worked to secure a parking lot for the teachers. In one action, a group of teachers joined AOP parents in blocking traffic at one of the intersections where they had requested a crossing guard.

"We need a crossing guard at 5th and York. [The AOP parent] *put flyers all over the school—everywhere—that the parents were going to go out and block traffic at the corner to get attention to what we need, and she asked teachers to join. Seventeen to 20 teachers joined the parents. We blocked the traffic for three mornings. We didn't go every day,*

but we went in small groups each day and joined with the parents. We had to leave to come back to class, while the parents continued. [The parent] *has a lot of respect in the school and she personally asked teachers to come."* WELSH TEACHER

When parents went to a community meeting to confront the mayor about the same issue, a small group of teachers also went. *"We didn't go with the parents, but both parents and teachers were there to speak up about the same thing."* The same "respected" AOP parent also accompanied the principal to City Council to try to move along a promise for a parking lot for the teachers.

The AOP after-school programs at Welsh and McKinley have also helped to build collaboration between teachers and parents and bring the two groups closer together. At both schools, teachers refer children to the program and help to select books, and at McKinley, a teacher is now working alongside parent-teachers in the after-school program. Teachers at McKinley have donated money to the program for snacks and supplies. At Welsh, teachers have opened their classrooms to the after-school program, and invited parent-teachers to use classroom materials including books, computers and games. The teachers' cooperation with the parents is evidence of the teachers' appreciation of the work it took for parents to start and run an after-school program. It also shows growing regard for parents as a resource in the education of children.

In an effort to connect parents and teachers even more closely, AOP has been involved in a two-year relationship-building campaign with the PFT. Although initially central union leaders rebuffed AOP's approaches, at the local school level parent leaders and the union's Community Outreach Committee held parent-teacher dialogues at several schools. When the teachers' contract was being negotiated, AOP reached out again to central union officials, pushing for a community briefing. In fall 2000, the union held the briefing and AOP turned out parents and community groups for the event. Shortly afterwards, AOP co-sponsored a rally in support of the teachers. During this period, the parent-teacher dialogues at AOP schools helped to maintain communication between teachers and parents. At Welsh School, for example, the PFT building representative described the process as *"[building] connection.... I met with the people in AOP. And [a parent] also came to union things. So, we had the connection....I think it was helpful. I felt that we got a lot of support from the parents.... It's about 10 teachers and 10 parents that are the communicators back and forth."*

After the contract issues were resolved, AOP continued to work with the Community Outreach Committee to build relations with the union. During summer 2001, the two groups co-sponsored a series of discussions based on shared readings. Topics included accounts of other cities where parents, communities and unions were working together and possible strategies for moving the PFT toward a greater concern with social justice.

At the McKinley School, the teacher-parent dialogues helped to lay the groundwork for other collaborative efforts. McKinley parents worked with the principal, teachers, and a local cultural group to have McKinley designated the site for a community mural. Planning and painting the mural helped to build trust among the groups. As an outgrowth of this project, the principal, librarian, special education teacher, and AOP parents are developing a multicultural curriculum. Work on the mural, along with the after-school program and the parent-teacher dialogues, have led to a new Home and School Association and a Local School Council with increased parent participation in decision-making.

AOP organizing at the middle school level is more recent, but even here AOP has already started to build relations with teachers. At deBurgos Middle School, AOP began by building relations with the PFT Building Committee. At the Pickett Middle School in Germantown, AOP parents have met with a group of teachers to re-examine the school's discipline policy. As a result of these discussions, parents expect to be better informed about discipline issues at the school and teachers anticipate that parents will be better able to support them in enforcing discipline.

Extending the Use of the School Facility

AOP after-school programs have extended the use of school facilities beyond regular school hours. During the first year, the after-school program used a library at one school, a couple of classrooms in another, and a specially designated room in a third. In the second year, with increases in the numbers of children and parents involved, additional spaces have been made available.

Several of the schools have opened their facilities to evening citywide AOP meetings. These meetings bring community people into the school to work on improving children's educational experience. In addition, through the participation of neighborhood, district and elected leaders in these meetings, schools become central places for addressing both school and community issues.

Third Indicator Area: Social Capital

Building "social capital"—relationships of trust and reciprocity—is central to AOP's goal of increasing parent engagement in schools. As one AOP organizer reflected, initially parents may be present in schools, but are often relatively isolated. Even though parents bring their children to school or even volunteer at the school, they are usually on their own. In describing AOP's work with parents, the organizer said that, "*We really are the ones that are trying to build and develop these relational networks.*" AOP has looked both inside the school, to strengthen relationships among the principal, parents, and teachers, and outside the school to the local community. In this report, we present two measures of AOP's success in building social capital: strengthened *parent-community networks* and new *reciprocal relationships between parents and teachers.*

Parent/Community Networks

"People aren't generally relating to one another in the capacity of school and education. Not in our community. We had a difficult time getting the community really involved in the issues that face their schools, because they're not, we're used to just sending our children to school and letting the school handle it. That's why it is so difficult in our community. But we've done that. At Kelly School, we've done a remarkable job." PARENT LEADER

In the Germantown area, AOP parent leaders have successfully drawn in a network of community groups and community members to become involved at Kelly School. One member of a Germantown community group, who has become an AOP Board member, noted that in his neighborhood, which has many active community groups, AOP is unique in its focus on the schools. Over the past several years, he explains, AOP has been successful in creating bridges between the school and community, bringing the resources of churches, community groups, lawyers, doctors—*"everything that exists in Germantown"*—to the school. This community leader argues that AOP has made the education of neighborhood children visible in the community. It was AOP's organizing that *"brought the issue to the front, to the forefront."*

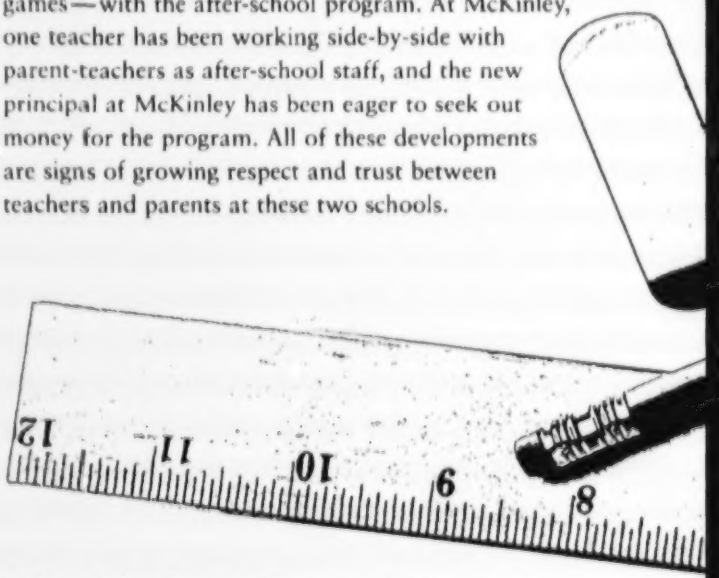
According to the community leader, AOP has been able to organize across social class boundaries. AOP galvanized community members from all sectors to volunteer as mentor readers in the school as part of the 100 Book Challenge. Senior citizens have volunteered to patrol the streets as part of the Safe Corridors initiative. A local pastor facilitated coordination between the teachers in his church's after-school program and classroom teachers, in order to improve homework help for children. Community groups have provided classroom space in their buildings to relieve overcrowding. Emblematic of the strengthened community network was a public forum jointly sponsored by several of the community groups and AOP during the mayoral campaign. Speaking in concert, audience members focused the candidates on public education and demanded that they explain their position on a range of key education issues.

Relationships of Reciprocity Between Parents and Teachers

At the schools where AOP Parent Leadership Teams have sustained their efforts over time, new kinds of relationships with teachers are developing. The principal at Welsh School, where AOP has organized over the past three years, commented that, *"Since AOP became involved...I think that there has just been a very strong bond that has taken place, that there's a mutual degree of respect and rapport between all the stakeholders in the school."* Similarly, the principal at the Kelly School, where AOP has worked for 5 years, noted that, *"Everyone's working now...There [had been] a history of fragmentation."*

These new kinds of relationships are especially apparent in the ways in which teachers and parents at Welsh and McKinley Schools are working together around their after-school programs. For example, at both schools parent-teachers are in regular communication with teachers about the students they have referred. Parent-teachers give classroom teachers regular reports about how students are doing with homework assignments and their perceptions of children's academic progress. Because parent-teachers become so familiar with the children through working with them intensively in small groups, teachers find that the parents are able to assist them in assessing areas where students need help.

The teachers are also finding that the parent-teachers play a valuable role as liaison to other parents. As one Welsh teacher pointed out, *"Parents will come to her [parent-teacher] before they come to me to deliver a message. And they [parents] feel comfortable because they know she's a parent and a part of the school."* In this teacher's opinion, the after-school program is fulfilling two needs: it helps children who are not doing well in the classroom or who do not have help at home, and it is a tool for strengthening communication between teachers and parents. Other teachers in the school shared similar sentiments about their interactions with the after-school staff. Welsh classroom teachers have been willing to open their rooms and share their materials—computers, books, games—with the after-school program. At McKinley, one teacher has been working side-by-side with parent-teachers as after-school staff, and the new principal at McKinley has been eager to seek out money for the program. All of these developments are signs of growing respect and trust between teachers and parents at these two schools.



Although the after-school program has been particularly strong ground on which to build new kinds of parent-teacher interactions, other venues have also contributed. At the McKinley school, an AOP-sponsored teacher-parent dialogue helped teachers and parents to identify areas to work on together, such as teacher vacancies and school security. At Welsh, according to the principal, when teachers saw the participation of 25-30 parents in the Home and School Association, *"It changed the perception of the teachers that came. They saw parents who cared."* Teachers and AOP parents have also built collaboration out in the community, as when a group of seventeen teachers left their classrooms and joined parents in blocking traffic at an intersection near the school where the parents wanted a crossing guard.

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Fourth Indicator Area: Equity

AOP organizing is directed at making Philadelphia public schools as strong as the best schools around, in Philadelphia and elsewhere. Philadelphia parents are familiar with the resources available in Philadelphia's prestigious private schools and in schools in nearby suburbs where children are thriving and learning. Parents are aware of the disparity between these schools and those in Philadelphia's low-income communities. They also recognize differences within the district; some have had the experience of moving their children from one district school to another only to discover different expectations in the level of work being assigned.

"It [equity] *has always been a powerful concept, because it's always been a comparison...okay, how come all children are the same basically, and we, how come because we live in a lower income neighborhood do we have to get less, our children have to drink out of lead fountains, our kids got to play in dirt, we don't have music lessons, we don't get gym until the second half of the year. But if you travel five minutes up the road to one of these prestigious schools, their kids* [have these things] *but not mine."* AOP PARENT LEADER

AOP parents have also developed strong images of successful schools in neighborhoods with demographics similar to theirs, through the AOP Effective Education Campaign, which has taken groups of parents on visits to schools in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, and New York. These images drive AOP organizing.

"We spend a lot of time to get the best that we can for our children and trying to make sure their education is not just mediocre.... As parents, our mistake is that as long as we see our children bringing home 95s and report cards with As and Bs, we assume they're doing great. But then when you compare it to a district like Cheltenham [a Philadelphia suburb] *or even another school in the District, the As and Bs we're getting here are Cs and Ds somewhere else."* PARENT LEADER, NOW ORGANIZER

Although initially AOP was intended to work in all or most of the city's schools, as its resources became more stretched, it began to focus on schools in some of the city's lowest-income and most racially and ethnically isolated neighborhoods. Nonetheless, through its citywide work building partnerships with other organizing and policy advocacy groups such as the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY), and the Philadelphia Education Fund (PEF), AOP has increased its leverage and played a role in securing resources for schools beyond the small group in which it has Parent Leadership Teams. AOP's accomplishments in the indicator area of equity include: *bringing in new financial resources for after-school programs and for crossing guards; re-directing the after-school program to children most in need of additional academic support;* and partnering with other organizations for the purpose of *waging a citywide campaign to address inequities in teacher vacancies and teacher quality.*

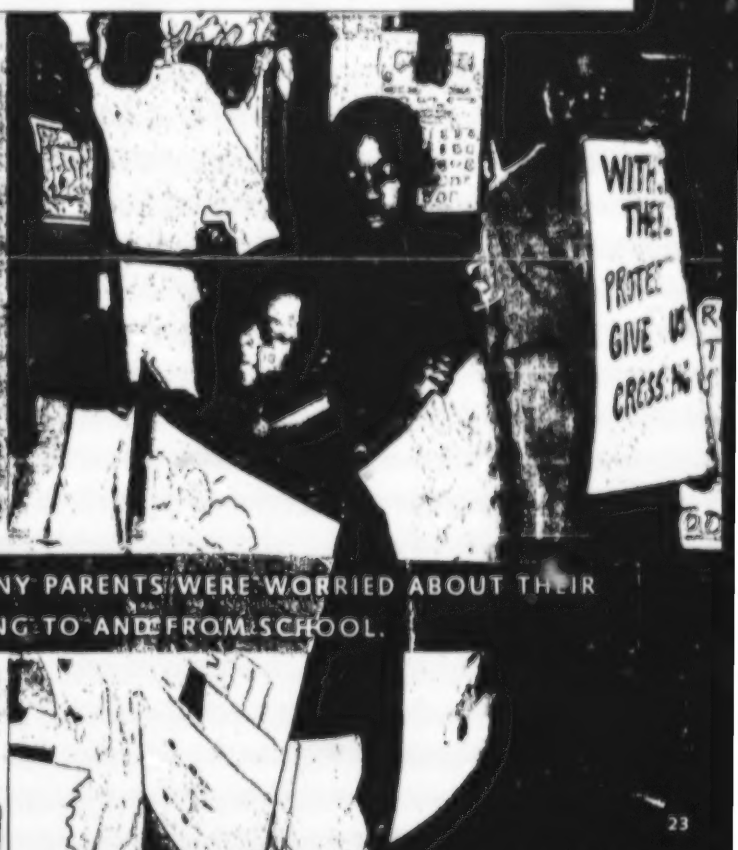
Bringing in New Financial Resources to Schools for After-School Care and for Crossing Guards

When AOP first proposed an after-school program in one of the schools, the principal told parents that he did not have staff or money. Undaunted, the parent leader came up with the idea that AOP could seek funds to support a parent-run after-school program.

AOP parent leaders proceeded to write grants for funding and brought in money from several local groups to cover the costs of parent-teachers' stipends and supplies, including books that could be sent home weekly with every child participant. Although the dollar amount per school was not large—about $6,000—it allowed the programs to get started in three schools. One of the funding groups, the Philadelphia Education Fund, augmented its financial support with professional development for the parents. In the second year, AOP succeeded in raising money from new sources, including the School District of Philadelphia, to continue the programs. By the third year the principal of the McKinley School was helping to raise funds for her school as well.

AOP has also brought in new resources through its citywide Crossing Guard campaign. Through listening campaigns involving one-on-one and small group meetings with parents, AOP parent leaders found that many parents were worried about their children's safety going to and from school. As part of their research into how to increase safety in the school area, parent leaders investigated the assignment of crossing guards, and discovered a police survey of several years back that indicated a need for more crossing guards. The number of crossing guards had been allowed to decrease through attrition. Those survey results, however, had never been made public. The AOP parents' research findings confirmed their fears for the safety of neighborhood children.

The parents identified corners where crossing guards had once been stationed, but were no longer assigned. These were mostly in low-income areas; more middle class areas were still well covered. At an AOP public event attended by several City Council members, a parent leader poignantly stated how indignant she felt learning that crossing guards had been maintained in higher-income neighborhoods but not hers. *"We are being neglected. We need more attention. We might be in North Philadelphia. We might be in the ghetto. But we are human beings."*



AOP PARENT LEADERS FOUND THAT MANY PARENTS WERE WORRIED ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S SAFETY GOING TO AND FROM SCHOOL.

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AOP began to work with a City Council member on this issue. After two years of persistent agitation, including two public hearings on the issue sponsored by the Council member, City Council allocated money to the police for additional guards. Staff in the Councilman's office reported that AOP was an excellent partner in the effort. *"The parent leadership is knowledgeable and articulate....They provide substantive evidence and excellent testimonies and reports."* The next step for AOP was to ensure that the police department hired crossing guards and assigned them to corners near their schools and at other dangerous intersections in low-income neighborhoods.

Re-directing the After-School Program to Children Most in Need of Additional Academic Support

In its first year, the after-school program was available to any children whose parents were interested in having them attend. In the second year of the program, however, the parent-teachers decided to use the program more strategically. There was little after-school support available for children in the earliest grades (K–2) because the schools' resources were being directed toward after-school tutoring for children in the older grades to prepare them for the standardized tests by which the school was held accountable for student progress. The parent-teachers believed that if they could assist children in academic difficulty early, their efforts could help avoid problems in the future. For these reasons, the parents decided to gear the after-school programs toward younger children, especially those who could not get at-home support because English was not spoken at home or because parents were working. The parent-teachers worked closely with classroom teachers to identify children most in need of the kinds of support the after-school programs could offer.

Waging a Citywide Campaign to Address Inequities in Teacher Vacancy and Teacher Quality

As was true in urban sites across the country, Philadelphia in the late 1990s began losing teachers faster than it was replacing them. Within the city, low-income neighborhoods often suffered the most from vacancies and inadequately qualified substitutes. This issue came up often in AOP-sponsored one-on-ones and house meetings as early as 1997. Parents told organizers and leaders that they were worried about teacher absences and classrooms without assigned teachers. The consequences of this teacher shortage—classes taught by short-term substitutes, classrooms combined or children reassigned to other groups—deprived their children of opportunities for learning. The box below contains the story of how AOP organized a campaign that over several years brought them into relationship with a range of different interests—other community-based groups, policy advocacy groups, the district, the city, and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers—to begin to address the related issues of teacher vacancies and teacher quality.

"Our Work Is Hard" The AOP Campaign to Reduce Teacher Vacancies in Philadelphia Schools

Parents within AOP began to express their concerns about teacher absences, unfilled teacher positions, and the scarcity of substitute teachers as early as 1997, before the issue of the spiraling number of teacher vacancies was widely discussed in Philadelphia. In response to the concerns of parents, AOP parent leaders began to research the reasons for and possible solutions to the lack of qualified teachers in their schools. They interviewed School Board members, the Superintendent, the District's Human Resources staff, and City Council members. After gathering information, AOP organizers and leaders brought back to a citywide meeting what they had learned so the group could determine which entity—City Council, the School Board, the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, or the Pennsylvania State Legislature—had the power to make the kinds of changes that could improve the situation. Many of the city's advocacy groups thought that the city's residency requirement was a major obstacle to teacher recruitment. AOP concurred and decided to focus its campaign initially toward City Council action on that issue.

In May 1999, after gathering information at their local schools about teacher shortages anticipated for the coming school year, AOP held a citywide accountability session where they stated their intention to partner with the District and other public school advocates in demanding that City Council declare a moratorium on the city residency requirement. The Superintendent, the head of District Human Resources, the President and Vice President of the School Board, and a City Council member attended. One hundred and fifty AOP parents and their supporters were present. AOP also focused on areas within the district's control: signing bonuses, cumbersome recruitment processes, and minority recruitment. The day after the public accountability session, the district announced incentives to attract new teachers to Philadelphia. Later that week, AOP and other advocates crowded City Council chambers during a session in which Council members were scheduled to discuss and vote on the residency requirement. City Council did relax the law that year, allowing teachers three years to become city residents.

The following year, AOP turned its attention to the teachers' union, which was entering into contract negotiations with the district. AOP leaders scrutinized the teacher contract and found that many aspects of the contract had implications for retaining experienced teachers in schools in low-income neighborhoods. When the new school year started, AOP was ready with a parent survey called, "What does the teachers' contract mean to me and my child?" The central union leadership got wind of the survey and tried to quash it, but AOP persisted and over 600 surveys were filled out.

Despite uneasy relations with the central union leadership, which consistently resisted the participation of parents in talks about contract negotiations, AOP was able to work with the union's Community Outreach Committee to co-sponsor parent-teacher "dialogues" at seven schools. These dialogues were an opportunity to identify shared parent/teacher interests and build trust at the school level between teachers and parents. Based on their own examination of the teacher contract and what they found out from teachers about factors contributing to high turnover, AOP formulated two demands: 1) a teacher not be allowed to request a transfer from a school until s/he had taught there for at least three years, and 2) teachers be required to give earlier notification of their intention to transfer or leave the system, so that classrooms could be staffed before the beginning of the following school year. AOP also supported reducing classroom size and raising teacher salaries.

In fall 2000, at a time when negotiations were extremely tense, the central union leadership, under pressure from AOP, held a briefing for parents and community organizations. AOP agreed to do outreach for the briefing, and, as a result, over a dozen organizations participated. Although AOP's relationship with central union leadership is not strong, in the final contract negotiations, many of the issues that AOP raised were addressed. AOP continues to work with the Community Outreach Committee to build dialogue between parents and teachers, and parent leaders work directly with small groups of interested teachers at all of the schools where AOP is organizing.

The contract changes did not result in immediate improvements in staffing; AOP leaders realized that changes in the contract and in residency requirements were not enough to resolve the teacher shortage. AOP leaders persisted with the issue through 2001, forming partnerships with another organizing group, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), and with an advocacy group, Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY), in order to leverage AOP's power. These partnerships formed the basis for a broader effort, the Citywide Neighborhood Schools Initiative. In January 2001, AOP and ACORN began interviewing principals of schools in neighborhoods where they were working to document teacher vacancies. Based on their interviews and data from the district, they showed that the greatest number of teacher vacancies were in the lowest-income neighborhoods of the city, two African-American and one Latino and African-American neighborhood. Meanwhile, PCCY began to gather information about approaches other urban areas were taking to deal with teacher shortages in low-income areas.

The activities of AOP and other organizations around this issue brought repeated press attention to the problem. In March 2001, AOP with ACORN brought 75 parents to a Board of Education meeting to report on their findings about teacher vacancies in their neighborhood schools. PCCY and AOP published a joint report, "The Citywide Neighborhood Schools Initiative: Who Will Teach Our Children?" which detailed teacher shortages in Philadelphia and the factors that discourage teachers from coming to Philadelphia, and made recommendations for remedying the situation. In order to gain visibility for the issue, PCCY hosted an open forum on the teacher vacancy issue with a panel composed of representatives from the district, the state, the teachers' union, and the media. A small group of AOP leaders was present to ask questions and keep their issues to the forefront.

One of the lessons of AOP research into teacher vacancy in Philadelphia is that the problem cannot be solved without solving the district's budget issues. One AOP leader commented that at her school they were losing teachers because of budget cuts, so they might not be able to offer art, music, and other subjects. She remarked that involvement with the teacher vacancy issue has taught her *"a lot of this cannot be resolved without the funds. It comes down to the funding."* In order to continue the effort to resolve the problem of teacher vacancies, AOP has turned its attention toward the state, working for full funding of Philadelphia's public schools.

One way to assess the growth of AOP's ability to leverage its school-based work for broader impact is to look at the further development of the kinds of relationships that have initiated the Citywide Neighborhood Schools Initiative, which brings together a grassroots, parent-based perspective and policy advocacy to improve Philadelphia's public education.

Future Directions

The start-up of AOP, linked to the *Children Achieving* reform plan and its commitment to "empowered parents and community," indicated that many Philadelphia school reformers recognized the need for outside forces pushing the system to help catalyze and sustain change in the district. However, AOP's connection with *Children Achieving* did not automatically legitimize its organizing efforts at the school level among principals and teachers. Furthermore, the central office faced competing demands from other components of the *Children Achieving* programs. The pressure to focus on implementation of standards and an accountability system, and to show improved test results in order to build a case for increased state funding, led the district to compromise on its commitment to decentralization.

As stated in this report, AOP realized early on that it needed an independent identity from *Children Achieving*. Establishing AOP as a partner to, but independent from *Children Achieving* was a major task of its first executive director. An achievement of AOP is its survival and continued work after the end of *Children Achieving*, the departure of Superintendent Hornbeck, and the termination of the Annenberg funding that had supported it during its start-up years. This transition was the major task of its second executive director. Two years after the end of *Children Achieving*, the post-*Children Achieving* context for Philadelphia's public schools is not yet clear. AOP's third executive director is working within a prolonged transition during which time the state has assumed control of Philadelphia's schools, dismantled the Board of Education, and appointed a state School Reform Commission, which is moving toward greater privatization of the system.

The struggle for AOP to establish a base in the schools from which it could connect with principals and teachers and build new kinds of relations between education professionals and parents has been both a major challenge and an area of achievement. As AOP moves forward, it faces additional challenges: *deepening and sustaining the work in the seven schools where it is now established* and *expanding the organizing to new schools; building on its existing relationships with teachers at local schools and through the union*; and *continuing to leverage its school-level work to impact policy and bring about system-wide change.*

Deepening, Sustaining, and Expanding its School-Level Organizing

At the current time AOP organizers are, for the most part, parents who have come up through the organization. They have benefited from participation in AOP as parent leaders, citywide co-chairs, intern organizers, and Board members. They have helped to ground AOP in seven schools in two neighborhoods, North Philadelphia and Germantown. Among the challenges this group of organizers face is the need to continuously replenish the Parent Leadership Teams in these schools so that the organizing is sustained as the first and second generations of parent leaders move on with their children to the next school level. AOP must also constantly assess with parents the situation within the district, which has been in flux since the end of *Children Achieving*, connecting local concerns with evolving policies that are changing the shape of public education in the city.

At the seven schools where AOP has a history of accomplishment, a major challenge, in the words of one organizer, is to *"make sure the work inside schools is rigorous and standards-based."* This organizer believes that as AOP's work in this set of schools matures, parent leaders must push toward examining instruction and curriculum and holding schools accountable for students' learning. In order to build the capacity to do this, AOP must help parents to look more closely at student work, assignment of teachers, grades, and standardized test scores, to be sure that they understand what their children are doing and where there is need for improvement. This role could be especially important if the district is privatized; it is one way of ensuring public accountability for improvement.

through union building committees. In a few instances, parents and teachers have built trust through co-sponsorship of dialogues by AOP and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT). In one school, the PFT building committee and the parents have formed a joint safety committee. In another school, the AOP/PFT dialogues led to collaboration of parents and teachers with a community cultural group on a school mural, which in turn has led to joint work developing a multicultural curriculum. In other schools, parents and teachers have come together around issues of mutual concern, such as the discipline policy.

As these examples show, there is no formula for building partnerships between teachers and parents at the local school level. AOP's approach has varied, depending on the opportunities at a given school. Organizers and parent leaders, however, believe that a key to their future success is pushing to bring teachers more fully into the organizing process. Visits to other community organizing groups in Oakland and Austin, where community organizers are working directly with teachers and/or teachers are leaders and members of the community organizing group, have given AOP some new ideas for expanding their work with teachers.

In addition, AOP plans to continue to work at the citywide level on issues that relate to teachers across the district. A next step in the teacher quality campaign is to work with other groups in support of a strong teacher mentor program in order to help retain new teachers and assist veteran teachers who are struggling. AOP will also continue its outreach to the central union leadership and its work with the PFT Community Outreach Committee, looking for opportunities to leverage its work at local schools to build parent-teachers relations into broader forums and more powerful relationships that can influence policy.

Impacting Policy and System-Wide Change

An important aspect of AOP organizing is analyzing the environment in which they are working and making strategic decisions about the power arenas they need to work in to catalyze change. AOP has begun to build relations in a number of these arenas, for example, with selected City Council representatives, with district leadership, and with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers.

One of the most promising set of relationships that AOP has been building is with policy advocacy groups. One example of this work is the formation of the Citywide Neighborhood Schools Initiative. In this collaborative effort, AOP brings a grassroots perspective and parent base that adds to the work of advocacy groups. For example, AOP, working in conjunction with ACORN, was able to document the reality of teacher vacancies and the tumult it causes daily for children in some of Philadelphia's lowest-income neighborhoods. The testimony of AOP parents added a complementary and powerful voice to those of advocacy groups. Similarly, AOP has been able to add a parent perspective to the debate about the proposed privatization of the Philadelphia School District. AOP parents have participated in rallies, lobbied state representatives, and testified before City Council. It is the intention of AOP to continue to build relationships with key players in different power arenas and identify ways to leverage its work at the local school level to influence policy decisions that have citywide impact.

Appendix A

Definitions of the Indicator Areas

Leadership Development builds the knowledge and skills of parents and community members (and sometimes teachers, principals, and students) to create agendas for school improvement. Leadership development is personally empowering, as parents and community members take on public roles. Leaders heighten their civic participation and sharpen their skills in leading meetings, interviewing public officials, representing the community at public events and with the media, and negotiating with those in power.

Community Power means that residents of low-income neighborhoods gain influence to win the resources and policy changes needed to improve their schools and neighborhoods. Community power emerges when groups act strategically and collectively. Powerful community groups build a large base of constituents, form partnerships for legitimacy and expertise, and have the clout to draw the attention of political leaders and the media to their agenda.

Social Capital refers to networks of mutual obligation and trust, both interpersonal and inter-group, that can be activated to leverage resources to address community concerns. Some groups call this "relational" power, while others describe this process as one of building "political capital." Beginning with relationships among neighborhood residents and within local institutions, community organizing groups bring together people who might not otherwise associate with each other, either because of cultural and language barriers (e.g. Latinos, African-Americans, and Asian-Americans) or because of their different roles and positions, such as teachers, school board members, and parents. Creating settings for these "bridging relationships" in which issues are publicly discussed is the key to moving a change agenda forward.

Public Accountability entails a broad acknowledgement of and commitment to solving the problems of public education. It is built on the assumption that public education is a collective responsibility. Community organizing groups work to create public settings for differently positioned school stakeholders—educators, parents, community members, elected and other public officials, the private and non-profit sectors, and students themselves—to identify problems and develop solutions for improving schools in low- to moderate-income communities. Through this public process, community organizing groups hold officials accountable to respond to the needs of low- to moderate-income communities.

Equity guarantees that all children, regardless of socio-economic status, race, or ethnicity, have the resources and opportunities they need to become strong learners, to achieve in school, and to succeed in the work world. Often, providing equitable opportunities requires more than equalizing the distribution of resources. Community organizing groups push for resource allocation that takes into account poverty and neglect, so that schools in low-income areas receive priority. In addition, groups work to increase the access of students from these schools to strong academic programs.

School/Community Connection requires that schools become institutions that work with parents and the community to educate children. Such institutional change requires that professionals value the skills and knowledge of community members. In this model, parents and local residents serve as resources for schools and schools extend their missions to become community centers offering the educational, social service, and recreational programs local residents need and desire.

High Quality Instruction and Curriculum indicate classroom practices that provide challenging learning opportunities that also reflect the values and goals of parents and the community. Community organizing groups work to create high expectations for all children and to provide professional development for teachers to explore new ideas, which may include drawing on the local community's culture and involving parents as active partners in their children's education.

Positive School Climate is a basic requirement for teaching and learning. It is one in which teachers feel they know their students and families well, and in which there is mutual respect and pride in the school. Community organizing groups often begin their organizing for school improvement by addressing safety in and around the school and the need for improved facilities. Reducing school and class size is another way in which community organizing groups seek to create positive school climates.

Appendix B

Indicators Project National Advisory Group

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Leadership Development

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1 Identify and train parents and community members (and sometimes teachers, principals and students) to take on leadership roles	
• Develop parent knowledge and capacity through trainings, research, public speaking, reflection, and evaluation • Encourage parents to take leadership roles in groups in the community (e.g., American Street Empowerment Zone, School District Community Resource Board) • Provide opportunities for parents to attend conferences, trainings by other groups (e.g., national conferences and trainings) • Create opportunities for parents to become leaders in AOP (e.g., elect parents to Board; develop parent leaders into organizers)	• Parents run meetings, interviews, public actions • Parents have school and community leadership positions • Parents have organizational leadership positions
2 Develop parents (and community members, teachers, principals, and students) as politically engaged citizens	
• Carry out power analysis of school and community with parents • Engage parents in research actions with district and elected leaders • Engage teachers and principal in public actions addressing school and community issues • Develop leadership skills and capacities of parents (e.g., public speaking, negotiation, reflection, and evaluation)	• Parents demonstrate knowledge about school systems and power dynamics • Parents demonstrate ability to make strategic decisions • Parents demonstrate confidence in skills of civic participation (e.g., leading meetings, designing agendas, public speaking)
3 Promote individual, family, and community empowerment	
• Support development of skills of civic participation (e.g., leading meetings, drawing up agendas, recording minutes, public speaking, interviewing) • Develop organizing skills (e.g. conducting one-on-ones, political analysis, supporting other parents) • Offer professional training for after-school parent teachers • Work with other groups to create opportunities for post-secondary education (e.g., the BARD program)	• Develop personal skills (e.g., resume writing, computer training) • Parents feel confident in taking on new roles • Parents perceive themselves as learning and growing • Parents are continuing their own education
DATA SOURCES • Interviews with school staff, parents and/or organizers on perceptions of parents as education and community leaders • Attendance records of parent participation in conferences, trainings, etc. • AOP organizational chart indicating Board membership, intern organizers, new organizers, and other leaders	• Records of parents' leadership in community organizations • Interviews with parents about their perception of their own growth • Interviews with school staff about their perceptions of the growth of parent knowledge about schools, school systems, and school reform • Observations of research actions • Interviews with school, district, and elected leadership • Stories of leadership • Media coverage of parent leadership

STRATEGIES reflect actual work of the group

RESULTS include actual outcomes that we identified and outcomes that the group expect

DATA SOURCES point to ways to document both actual and expected results

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Community Power

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1 Create a mass base constituency within communities that results in deep membership commitment and large turnout	
• Identify shared interests among parents at a school through one-on-one sessions, house meetings, grade meetings, research actions, etc. • Identify shared interests among parents from different schools and neighborhoods through citywide meetings • Work with local community and religious leaders/groups on issues of mutual concern • Use after-school programs as a vehicle to engage with parents and recruit for Parent Leadership Teams	• Increase in participation (numbers and degree of involvement) on AOP school teams • Increased participation of members of school teams at citywide level • Increase in numbers of community and religious groups that turn out members for AOP public actions
2 Form partnerships for legitimacy and expertise	
• Build partnerships among congregations, community groups, and AOP teams and schools • Build partnerships with other school reform groups (e.g., PCCY) • Build partnership with Community Outreach Committee of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers • Build partnerships with other community groups to expand geographical reach (e.g., ACORN)	• Media coverage gives credit to AOP for accomplishments • Community groups and school reform groups want to partner with AOP to expand their local influence and impact • Increase in visibility of AOP through its partner organizations • Expansion of AOP's influence to reach policy circles, teachers, and other groups
3 Create a strong organizational identity	
• Promote shared vision and language • Practice evaluation and reflection • Develop stories of parent leadership and successes • Draw media attention to AOP's work	• Parent participants share a language and stock of stories that illustrate work of parent organizing • Parents understand strengths of their work and where they need to develop new approaches
4 Draw political attention to organization's agenda	
• Hold elected officials accountable for funding, hiring, and assignment of new crossing guards • Campaign for solutions to teacher vacancies, including public accountability sessions around hiring incentives and retention measures • Hold public information sessions around future of Philadelphia schools (e.g., providing information about Edison Schools)	• Gain media attention • AOP parents are included in policy-making groups • Media covers AOP events and activities • Political leaders attend AOP events and/or are aware of AOP and the concerns of its members
DATA SOURCES • Turnout records • Newspaper, radio, and TV coverage of school issues	• Interviews with politicians, district leaders, congregational leaders, and school reform leaders • Observations of public events • Stories

Social Capital

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1 Build networks	
• Create visible, vocal, and knowledgeable parent teams at local schools	• Greater number of parents serving as education leaders in schools
• Create a citywide parent network	• Increase in ethnic diversity of parent groups
• Bring together multi-ethnic parent groups to act collectively	• Reduction of parents' sense of isolation
• Participate in citywide coalitions with other parent and citizen groups	
2 Build relationships of mutual trust and reciprocity	
• Build alliances between local congregations and parent teams	• Perception of greater connection between different kinds of groups (e.g., religious and community-based groups, religious groups and schools)
• Build alliances among leaders of faith communities and AOP citywide	• Increase in trust between professional educators and parents
• Build relationships between parent teams and teachers	• Perception of greater community support for children's educational opportunities and achievement
• Develop stronger communication among parents	• Parents are more likely to perceive themselves as being part of a group that supports them; reduction in parents' feelings of isolation
• Build relationships between community groups/community leaders and parent teams	
3 Increase participation in civic life	
• Sponsor public events in which candidates for office are asked to be accountable (e.g., hold the police and mayor accountable for funding of additional crossing guards)	• Public and district leaders are more likely to perceive themselves as accountable to parents
• Run elections for parent representatives on local school councils	• Increased involvement of parents as candidates for Local School Council; greater participation in elections
• Parents hold positions on community and School District committees (e.g., the Empowerment Zone, Community Resource Boards, District's Empowerment Team)	
DATA SOURCES	
• Interview and/or surveys about parents', teachers', and principals' sense of mutual trust, reduced feelings of isolation	• Interviews with organizers and parent leaders about their perceptions of development of new leaders, increased sense of efficacy in representing parents' ideas and concerns
• Attendance records and observations of parent teams, citywide meetings, and accountability events	• Interviews with community leaders about increased connection with other community groups and with schools
	• Interviews with political and district leaders about increased trust of parents and accountability to parents

Public Accountability

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1 Create a public conversation about public education and student achievement	

• Identify shared concerns among parents via:
  • One-on-ones
  • House meetings
  • Effective Education Campaign—visits by parents, organizers, and board members to successful schools
• Identify shared concerns with teachers through:
  • Parent/teacher dialogues at school sites
  • Summer 2001 discussion series for parents and teachers co-sponsored by AOP and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers Community Outreach Committee
• Identify shared concerns with other community groups through joint activities around shared concerns
• Hold regular meetings with the superintendent
• Hold meetings with political leaders
	• Growth in number of school teams
	• Sustained attendance at team meetings
	• Parents can identify areas in which they share concerns and can act jointly
	• Parents and teachers can identify areas in which they share concerns and can act together
	• Increased number of parents and teachers participating in school dialogues and/or discussion series co-sponsored by AOP and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers Community Outreach Committee
	• Increase in number of community groups involved and range of activities that groups do together to influence school reform
	• Parents bring their concerns and ideas to the attention of the superintendent and political leaders

2 Monitor programs and policies	
• Foster participation on school decision-making bodies (e.g. Local School Councils, school improvement committee) • Participate on District Review Boards	• Parents believe they are able to ensure implementation of decisions
3 Participate in the political arena	
• Hold accountability sessions with the superintendent, head of Human Resources, local police, and City Council members around issues such as obtaining crossing guards and taking measures to fill teacher vacancies • Organize for elections for Local School Councils • Increase in number of parents and depth of parent participation on Local School Councils, curriculum committees, school improvement committees	• Increase in the accountability of public office holders and School District personnel to parents • Parents who participate on Local School Councils and other decision-making bodies more likely to believe that they are representing the larger parent body • Increase in belief among parents that their ideas and concerns are represented in school decision-making
4 Create joint ownership/relational culture	
• Parents and teachers work together to make after-school programs a success through teacher recommendations of students, use of classrooms and classroom materials by after-school programs, a teacher co-teaching with parents, parents and teachers selecting books for the program together • Parents and teachers act together (e.g. blocking traffic to demonstrate need for a crossing guard, parents supporting teachers in obtaining a safe parking area near the school)	• Parents, teachers, and principal participate in joint decision-making on local school councils • Parents and teachers feel mutually accountable for supporting children who are having the greatest difficulty • Parents and teachers share educational materials in order to build mutual accountability for children's school success • Parents and teachers act together around shared concerns
DATA SOURCES • Attendance records of school teams • AOP records of school teams and their activities • Media reports • Attendance records of school-based parent/teacher dialogues and discussion series • Attendance records of Local School Council meetings and other school decision-making groups	• Interviews and/or surveys with teachers, parents, leaders of other community groups about perceptions of shared concerns and ability to act on them; influence parents are having on school decision-making bodies; representation of parents' concerns and interests in the Local School Council and other decision-making bodies; partnerships between parents and teachers; influence parents are having on political officials • Minutes of local school councils and other decision-making committees

Equity

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1 Increase funding and resources to under-resourced schools	
• Campaign to increase funds for safety (e.g., crossing guards; lighting; fences; safe place for after-school hours; new, safe playground equipment)	• Increased budget for crossing guards
	• Increase in number (37) of crossing guards
• Obtain community space for classrooms to reduce school overcrowding	• New kinds of exterior lighting
	• Safer facilities, e.g., safe playground equipment, new fences around school areas
• Provide grants for Reading Campaign for: English and Spanish-language books and materials for libraries and classrooms; 100 Book Challenge reading program	• Classroom space provided by community groups
	• Increase in school resources devoted to strengthening reading
2 Maximize access of low-income children to educational opportunities	
• Provide resources, community mentors and/or bilingual books through Reading Campaign	• Increase in enrollment in after-school program of English Language Learners and other children whom teachers perceive most "at risk"
• Provide extra attention to English Language Learners and children identified by teachers as needing extra supports through after-school program	• Academic and social improvement among children regarded as most "at risk"
	• New resources in schools as a result of Reading Campaign grants
3 Match teaching and learning conditions to those in the best schools	
• Support incentives for teachers (e.g., relaxation of residency requirement, signing bonuses, bonuses for teachers remaining in schools in lowest-income neighborhoods) to address teacher vacancies in low-income neighborhoods	• Reduction in teacher vacancy rate in schools in lowest-income neighborhoods
	• Improved teacher retention in schools in lowest-income neighborhoods
• Compare test scores, curriculum, and assignments across similar grade levels citywide and with schools in the suburbs	• Parents whose children have moved from one school to another find their children prepared and not in need of remediation
• New incentives in place to attract and retain teachers	
DATA SOURCES	
• City Council budget resolution for new crossing guards	• Proposals for grants from AOP Reading Campaign
• School District facilities budget	• Interviews with teachers and principals
	• School District policy from Human Resources records
	• School District records on teacher assignment and retention

School/Community Connections

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1 Create multi-use school buildings	
• Increase utilization of school buildings for after-school programs, meetings of parent teams, and citywide AOP	• Greater number and variety of community-oriented and community-run programs in the schools • Use of the school facilities as public space after school hours
2 Position the community as a resource	
• Create new roles for parents (e.g. as after-school parent-teachers; as advocates for resources for schools) • Foster cooperation of teachers with community groups (e.g., with church-based after-school programs to support children's reading and homework completion) • Gain community members' support for the school (e.g., as Safe Corridor participants, tutors, and mentors for 100 Book Challenge) • Initiate parent/teacher partnerships on school beautification projects (e.g., murals, cleanups)	• Increased parent presence in schools • Increased communication between parents and teachers • Greater perception of parents and community as a resource to the school • Increased communication between teachers and after-school programs in the community • Increase in community and teacher pride in their schools • Congregations and community groups work actively on behalf of local schools
3 Create multiple roles for parents in schools	
• Provide resources and training for parents to enable them to take on leadership roles (e.g., as after-school teachers, on local school councils, school improvement committees)	• Increase in variety of roles parents assume in schools
4 Create joint ownership of the school and school decision-making	
• Increase parent voting and participation on Local School Councils with teachers and principal • Increase parent participation on school improvement committees • Create parent/teacher partnerships to address mutual concerns (e.g., joint safety committee, selection of books to purchase for after-school programs)	• Invite teachers to work side-by-side with parents (e.g., teacher and parents co-teach in after-school program) • Sponsor parent/teacher dialogues • Greater number and variety of settings in which parents and teachers interact and/or work as partners
DATA SOURCES • School observations • Interviews/surveys with parents and school staff about relationships among parents, schools, and community	• After-school, Local School Council, and school improvement committee records of parent participation • Interviews with teachers, principal, and parents about their perceptions of communication among them, their relationships, and resources parents and community bring to the school • School and community newsletters

High Quality Instruction and Curriculum

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1 Identify learning needs, carry out research, and recommend new teaching initiatives and structures	

• Develop Effective School Campaign—visits by parents to successful schools serving low-income communities in Philadelphia, Boston, New York, and Chicago
• Organize a Reading Campaign
  • Carry out action research on best ways to support reading
  • Secure grants to school-based parent teams for books and other reading materials that enhance teacher/parent focus on reading
	• Develop after-school programs to provide academic enrichment and homework help for children identified by teachers as needing additional academic and social support
	• Increase in parent knowledge about conditions and strategies for improving children's education
	• Increase in resources to support reading in classrooms, libraries, after-school programs, and homes
	• Increased attention to children identified as needing additional academic and social support

2 Enhance staff professionalism	
• Develop a Teacher Vacancy Campaign to lobby for incentives to improve teacher retention, induction, and recruitment • Conduct research on rates of teacher turnover in the lowest-income neighborhoods • Lobby to prioritize incentives for teacher retention in schools with highest turnover rates	• Data showing that teacher turnover is highest in the lowest-income neighborhoods • Increase in numbers of certified teachers in classrooms in low-income neighborhoods • Greater number of teachers qualified in their subject area in schools in low-income neighborhoods • Increase in retention of teachers in low-income schools, especially in subject areas such as math, science, and foreign languages where teachers are most needed
3 Make parents and community partners in children's education	
• Parent-teachers run the after-school programs • Parents develop partnerships with teachers around reading initiatives (e.g., 100 Book Challenge, enhancing school libraries) • Parents bring community reading mentors into schools • Parents push for community-based after-school programs to coordinate with classroom teachers around homework help • Parents find community spaces for classrooms to reduce overcrowding in schools	• Parents take on new roles in schools directly related to improving teaching and learning • Students selected by teachers for after- school program demonstrate academic and social improvement • School overcrowding reduced
4 Hold high expectations	
• Campaigns such as the Reading Campaign or Effective Schools Campaign that demonstrate that parents expect schools to be able to improve student achievement	• Teachers perceive an interested, active parent body with high academic expectations for their children • Improvements in student test scores
DATA SOURCES	
• School records on the allocation of time and money for reading • Interviews and/or surveys of parents on: knowledge about schools that are succeeding; perception of contribution they are making to teaching and learning; prominence of reading out of school; expectations for children's academic and social success	• School and/or district records on teacher assignment and retention • School records on parents' roles in the school • Interviews/survey of teachers on: perceptions of improvement in homework completion; expectations for children's school success • Report cards and test scores of children selected for after-school program • Reading scores of all the children

Positive School Climate

STRATEGIES	RESULTS
1 Improve facilities	
• Get funds allocated and gain community support for renovations (e.g., new playground equipment, school murals, school cleanups)	• Parents, teachers, and community members feel pride in school area
2 Improve safety in and around the school	
• Get funds allocated and gain support from community, district, and/or political leaders for increased security measures for children and teachers (e.g., outdoor lighting, additional crossing guards; Safe Corridors programs; safe after-school place for children, such as homework club; protected area for teacher parking)	• Reduced number of traffic accidents • Reduction in robberies, personal incidents, and violence
3 Create respectful school environments	
• Parents and teachers work together on safety issues (e.g., forming a joint safety committee involving parents and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers Building Committee) • Parents and teachers work together on after-school program (e.g., teachers and parents select books together; teachers open their classrooms for after-school program; teacher works alongside parents in after-school program) • School is available for parent meetings	• Parents and teachers more likely to feel that they are working as partners in improving the school environment • Increased use of school building for parent and community meetings • Increased presence of parents in the school
4 Build intimate settings for teacher/student relations	
• Support union's call for smaller class size • Bring community mentors into classrooms for 100 Book Challenge	• Make visible public support for smaller class size, especially in early grades • Increase the adult attention students receive for reading
DATA SOURCES	
• Interviews and/or surveys with parents and school staff about perceptions of: increased safety in the school area; respectful teacher/parent relations; teachers and parents as partners; pride in school	• School District, neighborhood and city incident/crime reports • School sign-in sheets • School newsletters reporting events and meetings at the school

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Eva Gold, Ph.D., Principal, Research for Action, has served over the last decade as primary investigator of numerous local and national studies examining the dynamics among parents, community, and schools. Recently, she coauthored a major report, *Clients, Consumers or Collaborators? Parents and Their Roles in School Reform During Children Achieving, 1995–2000,* that is part of the overall evaluation of Philadelphia's systemic reform effort. She is a Guest Lecturer in the Urban Studies Program at the University of Pennsylvania, where she teaches a course in Community Activism and School Reform. She was the recipient of the Ralph C. Preston Dissertation Award from the Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania in 2000 for her study of the work a community organizing group did with parents at a neighborhood high school. This study extends her work of the last ten years in following the development of community organizing for school reform.

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Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform is a national network of school reform leaders from nine cities: Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Oakland, Philadelphia, and Seattle. The Cross City Campaign is made up of parents, community members, teachers, principals, central office administrators, researchers, union officials and funders working together for the systemic transformation of urban public schools, in order to improve quality and equity so that all urban youth are well-prepared for post-secondary education, work, and citizenship.

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